



# THE EXHORTER

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***“And with many other words did he testify and exhort, saying, Save yourselves from this untoward generation.” Acts 2:40***

The Palmer Road church of Christ, Westland, Mi. ([prchurchofchrist.org](http://prchurchofchrist.org))

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**Ephesians 5:1-2** *“Therefore be imitators of God, as beloved children; and walk in love, just as Christ also loved you and gave Himself up for us, an offering and a sacrifice to God as a fragrant aroma.”*

My friend Josh is a fire fighter. We had lunch yesterday. I love catching up with him. He is a man of faith, through and through. I learned that new recruits are given a one on one mentor to help them learn the ropes of the fire department and what to do and not to do when they are called on a run. All of us have had help through the years. I doubt any of us just "figured out" how to tie our shoes on our own. A parent showed us. There was a parent helping us take that first ride on our bikes without the training wheels. Then there was learning how to mow the yard, do the dishes, and driving. We had help showing us what to do.

In the church, we've had helping and guiding hands for those of us that served publicly. There were tips that others shared with us, such as don't drink a Coke before you preach or you'll burp in the microphone and everyone will hear you. Not good.

Our passage shares with us the greatest mentor and help of all, Jesus Christ. There is no one greater than Jesus. There is no friend like Jesus. There has been no help like the Lord's help. He is the greatest example. When it comes to learning forgiveness, look to Jesus. When it comes to compassion, Jesus is the best. When it comes to dedication and being focused, it's Jesus. When it comes to obedience, Jesus was perfect. Purity, it's Jesus. Kindness, it's Jesus. Worship, it's Jesus. Praying, again, it's Jesus. We sing, "what a friend we have in Jesus." Indeed.

Our passage defines our relationship and shows purpose and function. We are God's children. He is our Father. Like a child, we imitate our Father. My dad turns 90 in a couple of weeks. That's old. He knows that's old. He never expected to live that long. I doubt I will live that long. There are things I do because of him. I am a fanatic about my yard. It must be green, weed free and look like a golf course. That's the way our yard was when I was a kid. My dad was always nuking dandelions, working hard at it and making it something of beauty. I don't ever remember having a "father-son" discussion about yards. I saw what he did and liked the results and have followed that path. Many of us do similar things. It may be the way you take care of your car. It may be how you decorate your house. We've learned things from our parents.

(OVER)

Paul tells the Ephesians to imitate God. Do this by walking as Christ walked, in love. To be thoughtful of others and to go out of your way for others is what we learn from Jesus. There are limitations in imitating God. He is perfect, we never will be. He is all knowing, we are not. He is all powerful, we are not. He needs nothing, we need Him. However, even with these limitations, we can and should imitate Him. We imitate kindness, thoughtfulness. We imitate holiness. We imitate the concern for others. Selfishness ruins our looking like God. When we ignore the Samaritans in our life, we are not like Jesus. When we gossip and say mean things about others, we are not like Jesus. When we avoid others, like the rich man ignored poor Lazarus, we are not like Jesus.

Imagine what our churches would be like if just about everyone imitated God. Imagine the care, the love, the support that would flow through such places. Imagine all the people that would show up when there was a need. Imagine the multiple prayers that would be lifted up when there was a concern. Imagine the hugs, tears and love when one returned from the far country. Imagine forgiveness being the rule. Imagine gossip being tossed out. Imagine the big ones showing the little ones how to do things. Imagine everyone thinking the best of each other. Imagine hope abounding and goodness being the rule. There are places like that. I've seen that. It doesn't just happen, it takes people imitating God. It takes purpose and planning. In such places, folks don't talk about leaving, quitting or splitting. Why? You couldn't find a better place. In such places, new faces are showing up all the time because people are looking for something just like that. They tire of beating each other up. They tire of shooting their own wounded. They tire of playing church and pretending to be what they really are not.

Imitate God. Paul told the Corinthians a similar thing. The Romans were told to be conformed to the image of Christ. Peter told his readers to be holy as He is holy. There is a new role model on the street, and that is God. Imitating God will help us watch what we say. Instead of beginning a sentence with, "I probably shouldn't say this..." the imitator of God, simply doesn't say it. The imitator of God thinks of Isaiah's words, "Here am I, send me." I'll help in the kingdom. I'll do my part. I'll do my best.

Be like God. Not only will that change our churches, it changes our homes. Husbands would drop this male ego and be helpful, kind and thoughtful to their wives. He'd listen to her and find ways to honor her. She'd would make him feel like the king of the world. Together, with grace, forgiveness and Christ, they would grow in faith, head closer to Heaven and be a team for the kingdom. Together, they'd open up their home for others. Company would be a regular thing because it's around the table that real friendships are made and faith is encouraged. Their children would first see God through the eyes of the parents. Responsibility, respect, authority, obedience, love, hope, forgiveness and acceptance would be the standard. Kids would want to be home because it's a great place to be. You'd find them having their friends over because their friends would be welcome and find something that they don't have in their own homes. Imitating God shows. Following God is nothing more than letting your light shine. That's missing today. People long for it but don't know where or how to find it. Imitate God is the answer.

So there we have it. The call is before us. Imitate God. Do that when you drive. Do that at work. Do that when you come home. Show others what God would be like. This is how Jesus would be if He walked in my shoes, had my schedule, lived in my house, drove my car, worked for my boss. Jesus in me. That's a tall order, but God thinks you can do it. All of this takes some thinking before we act. It takes some thinking before you just open your mouth. Be like Jesus.

Let the beauty of Jesus be seen in me...

Roger Shouse